



IMPORTANT MEETING DATES

Tentative 2008–09 Collaboration Meetings

December 9, 2008

March 10, 2009

FROM THE DESK OF ...



DAVID RAWLINSON,
PALMETTO PRIORITY
SCHOOLS DIRECTOR



South Carolina
Department of Education
Together, we can.

Palmetto ... Priority Schools

The Upstate: Spartanburg Seven District

Whitlock Junior High

Whitlock Junior High ended the past year with many reasons to celebrate. During the year, the school focused on literacy strategies through the TAP initiative. This school-wide effort proved to be successful. The school had over a 10 percent gain in the number of ninth-grade students passing the English 1 EOCEP. I hope that this gain will be shown on the Spring '08 PACT results as well.

An all-expense-paid academic trip was offered to the Warriors as an incentive to work hard all year and do well on the state tests. The ninth-grade students who scored a C or better on all of their EOCEP assessments or who had an overall 3.0 grade point average for the year were rewarded with a trip to Washington, D.C. during June. The seventh and eighth-grade students who score basic or above on each of the PACT

assessments will travel to Atlanta, Georgia, this fall.

Several students from Whitlock were chosen to participate in academic enrichment programs during the summer. Two students were chosen for the Summer Enrichment at Dartmouth (SEAD) Scholarship Program, one student was chosen to attend a 5-week program at Phillip Exeter Academy, and one student was accepted as a

(continued on page 2)

Reflections Whitlock Junior High

Reflections on the PPS Conference

The first annual Palmetto Priority Schools Summer Conference entitled "Working Collaboratively to Increase Student Achievement" should be marked, "*Met or Exceeded Goal.*" The conference had a distinct mission for each day, and our school benefited from each day of events. The speaker for each of the general sessions was dynamic. Kati Haycock gave us

facts that made us alternately beam and then squirm. Stephen Peters provided us with the inspiration and knowledge that it can be done; he explained the necessity for changing the culture of the school to foster student achievement. Mike Schmoker examined the importance of data-driven results and let us know that it was an arduous, but not insurmountable, task.

We were excited and challenged to present a small

portion of our story to an audience. Whitlock's presentation was an example of how working collaboratively can bring positive results. It was also a testament to the importance of having a leader with a vision. The preparation for our presentation at the conference became a time of reflection. The discussions highlighted accomplishments, goals yet to be met, and what actions might help us move

(continued on page 2)

Reflections Whitlock Junior High(cont.)

further toward accomplishing our goals. Our principal listened to our discussions and summarized that he heard, "Data, Desire, and Duty." These three words became the focal point of our presentation.

The conference was an education stimulus incentive and Whitlock has *cashed its check*. The information that we brought back from the conference will be

shared in professional development settings. We are going to integrate what we learned during the conference into "The Whitlock Way." We found that many of the actions that we have implemented are in the right direction. We are off and running in 2008–09.



Charles Redmond, Principal, poses with a student

The Upstate: Spartanburg Seven District (cont.)

percussionist at the Governor's School of the Arts in Greenville.

Academic achievement is the number one goal at Whitlock. The teachers, staff, and community are uniting in an effort to achieve this goal. The school leadership team attended the TAP University during the week of June 23-26, 2008, to keep abreast of strategies and programs to enhance the learning environment at Whitlock. An ELA teacher, Mrs. Carolyn Reed-Smith, was the recipient of a 21st Century grant worth \$150,000. These funds will be used to incorporate fine arts to bolster the academic achievement of participating students. The school

received a \$25,000 Palmetto Priority grant to facilitate the academic reward system in place at Whitlock.

The faculty and staff were excited that the Spartanburg County School District 7 board members approved the Dream Catchers Academy, which will serve as a school-within-a-school. The academy goals are to help students reach appropriate grade levels, help students find academic success, and help make students' dreams a reality. The academy began this summer with 18 participating students who have an individualized cross-grade-level schedule. This is the first phase of their course prescription to advance them to the appropriate grade level. These

students will be monitored and coached by an interventionist. As skills are developed, the students will become more dedicated and will experience more gratification as they succeed in school and in life.

Whitlock's faculty and staff are excited about the upcoming school year and are ready to help all students catch a dream.



Teacher guides student on a rocket-science class project

Florence School District Four

Francis Marion University Partnership with Johnson Middle School at Work

Dr. Bill Whitmire from Francis Marion University is providing training for Johnson Middle School teachers on the use of Smart Boards and document cameras. Each teacher has been working diligently with Dr. Whitmire; Mr. Livingston, Florence School District Four Technology Director; and Michele Heyward, Technology Coach, preparing for the new school year. Dr. Whitmire's first assignment for teachers was having a lesson ready for the first day. Johnson Middle School teachers are excited about the new technology.

This course on utilizing the Smart Board to increase student achievement will provide credit renewal. Teachers who signed up for the course began on August 4, 2008. Last year, the district provided Johnson Middle School with Macintosh Apple Laptops, mounted Smart Boards, document cameras, and classroom response systems. This year teachers will implement the use of the new technology to enhance instruction and increase student engagement and achievement. Dr. Whitmire has been working extensively to ensure teachers receive a "jump start" on Smart Board lesson implementation.



Dr. Whitmire, Francis Marion University trains Johnson Middle School faculty as part of a collaborative between the two Institutions

Robert McDonald Named Johnson Middle School Principal

Robert "Buster" McDonald is a 1975 graduate of Lamar High School and a 1980 graduate of Clemson University, where he received his Bachelor of Science degree. Mr. McDonald began his teaching career in 1984 at Timmonsville High School, where he was also an assistant football and baseball coach. Mr. McDonald received his Master of Education degree in Education Administration from the University of South Carolina in 1998. He remained at Timmonsville until 1998 when he became an assistant principal at Ronald E. McNair Junior High in Lake City, SC.



Robert McDonald, Principal

He returned to Timmonsville High in 1999 as a teacher. Mr. McDonald worked as Assistant Principal/Curriculum Coordinator at Timmonsville High until 2008. The last two years that Mr. McDonald was at Timmonsville High, they received their highest Report Card rating in years (Average) and won the Palmetto Gold Award.

Message from the Director of Palmetto Priority Schools

Welcome to our first publication of the 2008–09 school year. Many months have past since Dr. Jim Rex received approval for the Palmetto Priority Schools initiative (PPS). With the approval of the initiative, we embarked upon the task that would deliver unprecedented site-based services to sixteen of our state's schools.

During our first year, five full-time staff members and two part-time administrative assistants delivered services to sixteen schools in our state that were facing difficult challenges. In addition, we held three collaboration meetings; hosted a three-day conference on July 28–30; sponsored a career fair at Francis Marion University; participated in two statewide career fairs with CERRA; traveled to Michigan, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Ohio to assist in recruiting certified staff; and developed partnerships with a large percentage of the colleges and universities.

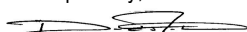
In an effort to manage the increasing workload, additional part-time liaisons were engaged during the summer of 2008. Part-time liaisons serve each school six days a month. Our full-time staff has the responsibility of clusters of schools and works with the part-time liaisons assigned to the schools in their cluster.

Our first collaboration meeting for this academic year was held on October 7, 2008, at the Columbia Conference Center. The next two meetings are scheduled for December 9, 2008 and March 10, 2009.

Our recruitment efforts were successful, and none of the 16 schools had vacancies in the core academic areas. One school had two Spanish vacancies that were eliminated by utilizing South Carolina ETV and virtual learning.

The South Carolina Department of Education has experienced significant budget reductions. We will be as prudent as possible in an effort not to have to reduce our level of assistance to the 16 PPS. If reductions are unavoidable, we will try at all cost not to minimize the service you receive.

Respectfully,



David Rawlinson
Office of Special Projects
Palmetto Priority Schools

A Glance at the Low Country: The Charleston County School District

Stall Fit for Life

During the summer a group of teachers and administrators from Stall High School and Mitchell Elementary visited Naperville, IL, researching the P.E. 4 Life Program. Stall will implement a P.E. program, placing additional emphasis on the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

During the first semester, ninth graders enrolled in P.E. will participate in an intense and rigorous physical activity program. Special emphasis will be placed on developing and improving body circulation, increasing lung capacity, building endurance, and developing greater flexibility and coordination.

Students will experience the benefits generated through exercise, good nutrition, and proper rest. The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) has partnered with Stall High in this worthwhile endeavor. MUSC has established a Lean Team which works collaboratively between MUSC's Department of Pediatrics, Division of

Adolescent Medicine, and the Charleston County School District.

Faculty and staff members are also able to participate in the program two days per week for 30 minutes per session. Dan Conner, Principal of Stall High, has asked the lunchroom staff not to fry any foods. He is a firm believer that healthy bodies help generate healthy minds.

Stall High has a well-equipped weight room and two dedicated individuals, Jim Wilson and Anne Wyman, who coordinate this program. Student follow-ups and surveys will be conducted to measure the effectiveness of the program.

The physical, emotional, and social benefits of this program should transfer into improving academic achievement, reinforcing the need for life-long physical fitness.

A Glance at the Low Country: The Charleston County School District (cont.)

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DESK by Brooks Moore, ERTL at Stall High and North Charleston High

I began the 2007–08 academic year as an Palmetto priority Schools Liaison (PPSL) with the Palmetto Priority Schools. I was assigned to Stall High and North Charleston High in Charleston County.

My job responsibilities included classroom observations with feedback, working with the building and district administrators conducting staff development sessions, and serving as a liaison between the schools and the SC Department of Education. The best part of my job was getting to know and work with the teachers, faculty, staff, and administrators at both the building and district

levels.

With nine weeks remaining in the school year, I was asked to serve as Interim Principal of North Charleston High School. After meeting with the faculty, staff, and administrative team, I hit the ground running.

It did not take me long to realize that the shoe was now on the other foot. I would have to practice as a high school principal what I had been preaching as an PPSL. I had spent 32 years as a public school administrator and knew that the “principalship” was still a tremendous and rewarding challenge.

My expectations soon became more realistic and less idealistic. I began to experience firsthand the frustrations teachers and administrators in the Priority Sixteen Schools experience on a daily basis. I also saw

many miracles they perform daily in the lives of children.

I got to know the parents of my students on a more personal basis. I learned to cry and laugh with them. Even though they lacked the economic resources many of us take for granted, they still loved the children dearly and wanted them to reach their fullest potential. I learned that over 60 percent of our students held part-time or full-time jobs to help supplement their families' incomes.

The entire North Charleston school family became part of my extended family. God puts us where He needs us, and I am so thankful that He allowed me the opportunity to grow as a professional.

Because of my tenure as Interim Principal at North Charleston High, I feel a new sense of dedication and commitment to my job and those I serve. Thank you for allowing me to grow professionally.

Brentwood Middle

Principal Wears Two Hats— Educational Leader and Community Organizer

Brentwood Middle School in Charleston, South Carolina, opened the first day with all teachers in place to rally around it students with the administrators, staff and the community in place to carry out the mission of the school. The principal felt that the team was off to an excellent start with all key persons in place. The coming together of these two groups could only be a win-win situation for the students.

This is a victory in itself as the 363 students were met at the door with enthusiastic teachers waiting to teach and coach them through the learning process. Back in May of 2008, all of the school's stakeholders committed to a school that would be community-focused. At the beginning of the 2008–09 school year, the school has embarked on pulling in all of the stakeholders to make sure that the

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Burke High School: Students at Work!



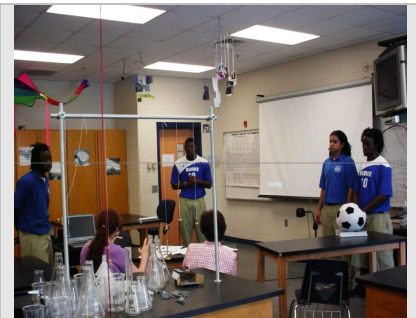
Recitation . . .



Project presentations . . .



Student Voices on school-wide
Broadcasting service



Student engagement . . .

A Glance at the Low Country: The Charleston County School District (cont.)

Brentwood Middle School (cont.)

students receive a quality education that is supported by a partnership between the school and the community. The principal commented that "it is critical to have highly qualified teachers in every classroom at Brentwood Middle from the first day of school."

That is why the school opened their doors first to students and parents/guardians as they emulated a day in their child's school. This helped parents to understand the new schedule that encourages additional time in the language arts and math. During this Open House, parents were greeted and welcomed into the school environment with the administrative staff fielding questions from the group of parents. Students were also encouraged to ask questions about any of the school programs. Parents changed classes with their students and got a feel for a day in the life of the students at Brentwood.

One way that the school supported the partnership with the community is through its first annual "Community Rally."

Business partners, local ministers, local political leaders, subdivision community leaders, and other interested family members and community persons were all invited to come out and enjoy the festivities. A local radio station, Z-93, broadcasted from Brentwood Middle School. The evening was filled with information, food, and fun and time to share the school with the community. The community event was held on Friday, August 29, 2008, at Brentwood Middle School from 6:00 pm–8:00 pm.

The community was so excited and enjoyed the live broadcast on the radio from the school.

This year students will get an opportunity to participate in an Art-Infused Curriculum, Advancement Via Individual Determination, Making Middle Grades Work, Drop Everything and Read, 21st Century Afterschool Program, and the BRIDGE Program for incoming sixth

grade students. As you can see, the students have a year packed with successful middle grades programs that are known to engage the middle school child.

Brentwood would like for the community to know that the students and their families are the priority. It is a supportive environment, and the student will have everything that they need in a safer environment to SUCCEED.



Students taking a breather



A Glance at the Low Country: The Charleston County School District(cont.)

North Charleston Summer Reading Program

In the spring of 2008, the English department at North Charleston High School wanted to assist in each student's journey as a lifelong learner; therefore, all students completed a summer reading program. During the first week of school, students were assessed on their book selection; those students who did not read a book over the summer were given an extension through September and an alternative reading assignment with which to complete summer reading – based projects in class.

The books selected as part of the reading program were appropriate for our students' interests and ability levels and are consistent with the South Carolina English Language Arts Standards and specific course and unit objectives. Parents were encouraged to review the titles with their children to assist in making the appropriate book selection.

Students were asked to select a book according to the grade-level English, which they would enter during the 2008–

09 school year. Students with spring semester English are expected to complete the same assignments, which will be due on the first day of class following the winter break (January 2009).

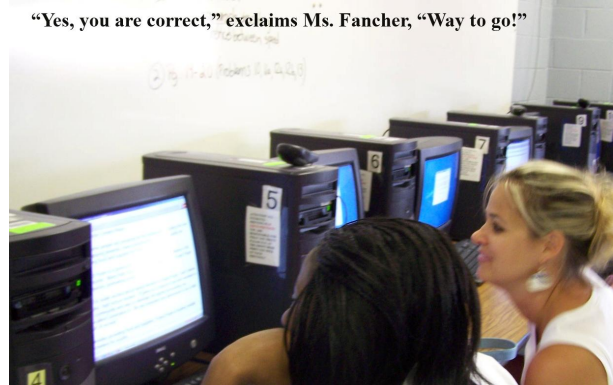
Students enrolled in college preparatory classes were required to read one book from the appropriate grade-level list. Students enrolled in the Honors curriculum were required to read the starred selections from their grade-level list.

Students were to complete the following assignments based on their selected readings:

- Create a character list including a brief description of each
- Create a list of the important events in the novel explaining their importance/significance to the overall meaning of the piece.
- Respond to open-ended questions while making connections to real-life situations.

As a department, we will meet in March 2009 to assess the success of the summer reading program and discuss any necessary changes to be implemented next school year.

"Yes, you are correct," exclaims Ms. Fancher, "Way to go!"



"Smile for the camera." The Photography Class practices their camera skill.



"So that's how you clean the coils!"



"You're doing just fine with the EPI pen application," encouraged Mrs. Kizer.



A Glance at the Low Country: The Charleston County School District(cont.)

From the Dean Burke Middle School is proud of the efforts of the PBIS team. PBIS WORKS!!!

Our students are really raising the BAR (Be Prepared, Act Responsibly, and Respect Everyone) of higher expectations and are being held accountable for their actions. As a result of the efforts of the PBIS team, students have been able to participate in a dress-up day, where they were able to wear clothes to express their own personalities instead of the school's uniform. Students were also able to use their Bulldog Bucks to purchase instructional items and some interesting game pieces. Knowing that the first steps to improving student academic achievement is by allowing them to own the responsibility for their learning is a major part of the Burke Middle School improvement efforts.

New Literacy Project

I have been speaking with members of the College of Charleston's Center for the Advancement of New Literacies in Middle Grades, and they are interested in presenting a series of professional development sessions to the faculty relevant to addressing not only the way to look at literacy but also the study

of new forms of literacy that have been created as a result of technological changes and advancements. During an earlier professional development session related to MMGW, I mentioned how student technological devices may have a place in the modern day classroom. Well, New Literacies involve everyday uses of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing to communicate in the 21st century.

Additional information regarding New Literacies will be forthcoming and shared with you following a meeting of the leadership team on this topic.

Professional Learning Communities

The **Professional Learning Communities (PLC) at Work Institute** is designed to help educators implement the most promising strategies for improving their schools in substantive ways. Every aspect of the program offers specific, practical strategies to help educators apply the powerful concepts of the PLC at Work model in their own school setting. The institute offers collective inquiry into best practices, reflection, renewal, networking, and planning for implementation.

Burke Middle School's participants will be bringing back information related to the following:

- **Shared Mission, Vision, and Values**
Investigate the proven strategies of North America's most successful schools and discover how to align school practices to promote higher levels of student learning.
- **Systems of Intervention**
Learn how to create timely, directive, and systematic interventions that give all students the time and support they need to be successful.
- **Overcoming Barriers**
Learn how you can conquer frustrating obstacles like dwindling resources, limited time, resistant staff, and fragmented initiatives.
- **Powerful Assessments**
Discover how schools are using common formative assessments to inform teacher practice, identify students needing support, and fuel continuous improvement.
- **Continuous Improvement**
Create systematic processes that ensure every teacher and team receives the information and support necessary to maintain positive momentum in reaching ever-higher goals.
- **Collaborative Teams Focused on Learning**
Identify proven strategies for creating a collaborative culture in your school or district.

The mission of the South Carolina Department of Education is to provide leadership and services to ensure a system of public education through which all students will become educated, responsible, and contributing citizens.

Our Priority Schools

Allendale-Fairfax Middle School
(Allendale County)

Brentwood Middle School
Burke Middle School
North Charleston High School
R.B. Stall High School
(Charleston County)

Johnson Middle School
(Florence District 4)

Estill Middle School
Estill High School
(Hampton District 2)

Ridgeland Middle School
(Jasper County)

Mt. Pleasant Middle School
(Lee County)

Alcorn Middle School
C.A. Johnson High School
Eau Claire High School
Gibbes Middle School
W.A. Perry Middle School
(Richland District 1)

Whitlock Jr. High School
(Spartanburg District 7)

Ridgeland Middle School News

Our 2008–09 school year started with many exciting events. The new teacher academy was August 5–8 with teachers new to the district learning the ropes in Jasper County. New teachers came from across the United States and as far away as Canada and India with some new hometown team members as well. Workshops were presented in single-gender accommodations, ADEPT, and district technology. The whirlwind week culminated with a meet and greet luncheon with many community leaders who were entertained with skits prepared by the new teachers.

New teachers and returning staff alike were pleased to learn of the Ridgeland Middle School's choice for teacher of the year, Ms. Christine Walker. Ms. Walker has been the instrumental music instructor at Ridgeland Middle School for 7 years. She has always been a supportive participant in many student-centered activities and is loved and respected by all. Congratulations, Ms. Walker!

Other exciting changes included reorganizing to the traditional grades 6–8 middle school concept with a sixth-grade academy and new school uniform colors.

We are off to a great start in the Low Country and are eager to continue this positive trend.



Students get awards for outstanding work



Career Day Speaker captures students' attention

Lee County School District

Mt. Pleasant Middle School

As principal of Mt. Pleasant Middle School, I have been working diligently to prepare for the 2008–09 academic school year. We made some changes that will allow us to continue to strive for excellence in the areas of academics and technology.

We have implemented several programs and enhanced several others to continue our reading focus such as Reading 180, Read-About across content subject areas, and schoolwide book club.

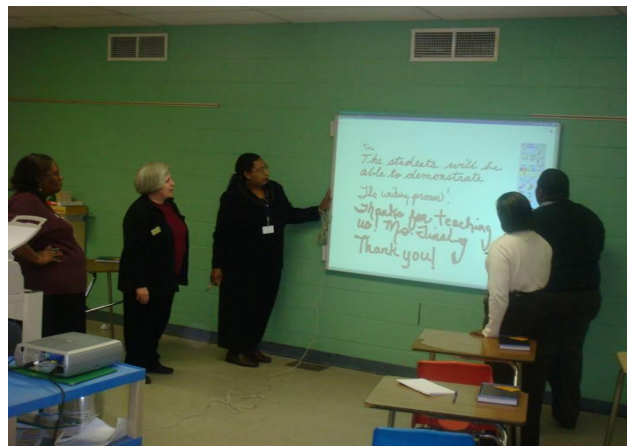
Mt. Pleasant's instructional staff participated in the development of the Lee County Instructional Timeline. This instrument will be used to assist teachers in their daily lesson plans and provide an outline of standards to be taught in a timely manner. New teachers will be given this Instructional Timeline to assist them in

planning for a new year.

Resources listed will be valuable to assist teachers in preparation to meet the education needs of their students.

The Star Academy will serve students who have been challenged academically in a traditional classroom setting. Students will learn to work in teams and participate in service-learning activities. Star Academy will provide technology-based instruction and equipment to assist teachers and students in their daily academic quest.

As principal, I have an open-door policy and welcome visits from all. I strive daily to make educational decisions that are data driven and for what is in the best educational interest of the students of Mt. Pleasant Middle School — "Where Learning is Supreme & Failure is Not an Option."



Teachers work collaboratively with Southern Wesleyan University to learn about SMART BOARD

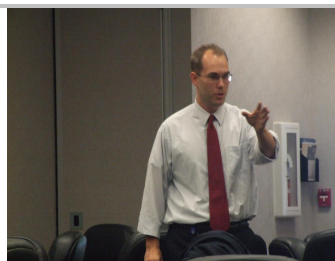


Class picture for building memories

The Palmetto Priority Schools Summer Conference



Helen Long, **Sopris West Educational Services**, at Early Bird Sessions



Joel Medley, on developing Charter Schools



Mary Harrison and Kelly Reddin, on the **Star Academy**



Dr. Miriam Chitiga, Palmetto Priority Schools, at PPS award presentation

Every picture tells a story!

Eau Claire



Rodney Zimmerman, Principal recognizes students for academic achievements

W.A. Perry



W.A. Perry's ROTC Drill Team, with State Superintendent, Jim Rex

North Charleston



Students receive JROTC awards

W.A. Perry



Students learn English

Hampton Two School District

Estill Middle School

“Teamwork — Working Together To Build A Better Tomorrow”

**Vicky Pollins, Lula Seabrooks,
Mary Wilson, Master Teachers
Julia Lee, Principal
Synetria Hawkins, Assistant
Principal**

If we could truly establish high levels of learning for all students as the guiding principle of our schools....If, we are willing to honestly confront the brutal facts of the current reality in our schools....If the right decisions about what to do and what to stop doing could become evident.... We could establish a high level of learning through a Professional Learning Community (PLC.)

At Estill Middle School, our vision is to ensure that every child is afforded the opportunity to reach his or her highest potential through collaboration, *collegiality* that occurs through standards-based and data-driven instruction. We strive to move each child to a higher level through any means necessary. We have embraced the Professional Learning Community philosophy, and it is a natural part of our being from district-level administrators to the cafeteria staff. Our Professional Learning Community (PLC) has resulted in teachers finding help, support, and trust as a result of

developing warm relationships with each other and students.

The term Professional Learning Community (PLC) has become quite commonplace in education circles. The term describes a collegial group who are united in their commitment to an outcome of academic success. It is a work environment that allows the school staff/district to work in collaborative teams to continually analyze and improve classroom practice in an effort to influence student learning.

The benefits of a Professional Learning Community to educators and students include reduced isolation of teachers, better informed and committed teachers, and academic gains for students. Shirley Hord of the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory says, that as an organizational arrangement, the professional learning community is seen as a powerful staff-development approach and a potent strategy for school change and improvement.

School change and educational leadership literature clearly recognize the role and influence of the building-based administrator principal and sometimes-assistant principal on whether change will occur within the school.

done only with the sanction of the leaders and the active nurturing of the entire staff's development as a community.

In a PLC, Kleine-Kracht suggests that administrators, along with teachers, must be learners too—questioning, investigating, and seeking solutions for school improvement. The traditional pattern that teachers teach, students learn, and administrators manage is completely altered, and there is no longer a hierarchy where someone knows more than someone else, but rather there is a need for everyone to contribute. In our district, the leaders lead — there is no boss — we share as a family collaborating as an equal partnership of stakeholders for total improvement and academic success.

As in Senge's paradigm shift, our learning community is demonstrated by people from multiple backgrounds, at all levels, collaboratively and continually working together. Such collaborative work is grounded in reflective dialogue, in which staffs conduct conversations about students and teaching and learning, identifying related issues and problems. As we engaged in such conversations, we learned to apply new ideas and information to

problem solving and, therefore, were able to create new conditions for students.

Tools key to the learning community process are shared values and vision; supportive physical, temporal, and social — conditions; and shared personal practice. The staff must not only be involved in the process of developing a shared vision but must be challenged and expected to use that vision as a guidepost in making decisions about teaching and learning in the school. Physical factors that support learning communities include

- designated and protected time to meet and talk,
- small school size,
- physical proximity of the staff to one another,
- interdependent teaching roles,
- well-developed communication structures,
- school autonomy, and
- teacher empowerment.

At Estill Middle School, change started with each of us as we identified our *faults*. Where do we go from here? We are in a race against time. Our paperwork is piling up and now we have more to do. However, we will make use of every opportunity, experience, and collaborative decision to translate student learning into academic success for every student.

Hampton Two School District(cont.)

Estill High School **“Where our Students Enter** **to Learn and Depart to** **Serve”**

At Estill High School we are in the “change process.” We are trying to make sure that we run and conduct our school as a place of business. I’m saying this because I would like to share a few things with you and send you a few attachments.

We received Title Five funding for the 2008–09 school year for the first time in years. This was possible because of the hard work that our staff put in to make sure that our data was entered correctly and constantly monitored to ensure that we were in compliance.

We feel that our Star Academy Program is one of the best in the state of South Carolina. This past year we had 85 percent of our ninth graders moving on to the tenth-grade. Our Star Academy program won the top award at our first Palmetto Priority School Conference held at the Columbia Convention Center in July 2008. We had one of our teachers, Mr. Kirau Katta, featured in the Star Academy’s National News Letter.

We are in the process of turning our school into a Professional Learning Community.

Our parent night on August 14, 2008, was a great success for Estill High School as well as for our community. For the month of September, we had our Freshman and Sophomore Exhibitions where we shared strategies and ideas with parents on how to successfully obtain achievement in preparing for the EOC and the HSAP Test. We have ninth-grade parent night in October to make students and parents aware of Individual Graduation Plan, end-of-course test, transcripts, expectations, attendance, and Discipline.

We are providing our staff with the type of staff development that will improve those components that drive our report card rating. Those four areas are our first-time HSAP Test takers, our longitudinal HSAP Passing rate, End-of-Course Test, and our graduation rate. We made positive movement in all areas this past year.

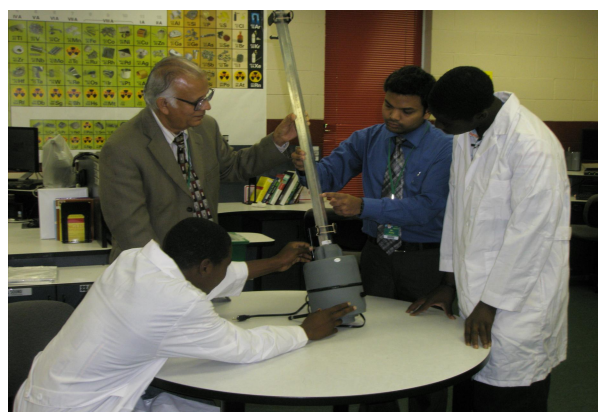
Some of the staff development that we are providing our staff includes

1. Set of standards with Cognitive Process Dimension levels defined in the following courses:

- English I
- English II
- Algebra I
- Physical Science
- U.S. History

2. Staff development on how to use the COD in determining the level of indicators (1 above). As part of the training, standards may be provided to teachers, and they will be asked to define the CPD levels of the indicators.
3. Staff development to teachers on how to use a released test item to define the enroute learning that a student needs to answer the questions.
4. Staff development for teachers on how to write assessments to the level of standards.
5. Training administrators to use observations and assess assessment to see if teachers are teaching and/or testing to the proper level of the CDP.

Our after-school program is designed to remediate those ninth-grade students who did not pass the End-of –Course Test. The after-school program will serve all of our tenth graders who will take the HSAP for the first time in April of 2009. Our after-school program also serves as a remediation for those students that did not pass the HSAP exam on the first try. The program will also serve as a tutoring agency for those students that feel that they need extra academic areas, (A) Math, (B) English, (C) Science, (D) Social Studies.



Star Academy science class project

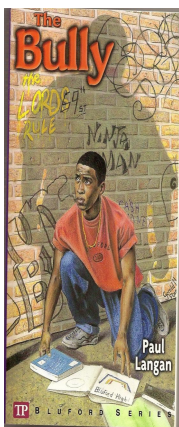
Richland One School District

As a South Carolina Reading Initiative School and Palmetto Priority School, school-wide literacy is the focus. Literacy Coach Roslyn Bellinger has accepted the reading challenge from the president of Townsend Press, John Langan. The Townsend Foundation gives away free books because of three beliefs about students and reading:

- The more kids read, the better off they will be.
- To get kids to read, give them books they will want to read.
- Every student has the right to experience the pride and dignity of owning his or her own books.

Just what is the challenge? In exchange for the free copies of the first book, *The Bully*, by Paul Langan, four tasks must be completed as follows:

- Submit a participation request to the Townsend Foundation.
- A teacher or librarian must read the first chapter aloud to students to interest them in the story.
- After the read-aloud of chapter one, copies are distributed to all students to keep as their own.
- Document participation and compliance by using the free camera included in book shipment to authenticate that the books were indeed distributed to the students.
- Once the camera is returned to the Townsend Foundation, they will forward a free boxed set of eight additional Bluford series for distribution to the students.



Alcorn Middle School will begin a school-wide read of the novel, *The Bully*, during their Academic Literacy class period. Bellinger states that this school-wide read will help students become better readers by engaging the students in focused conversations in a supported setting using a high interest level text. It will also aid in building a library for the students at home. Culminating activities are planned for the students at the completion of the book. All teachers have been trained in how to facilitate a regular and an interactive read-aloud, and they are looking forward to the receipt of the free, boxed sets for the students. The new principal, Dr. Baron Davis, believes that engaging students in a structured reading environment, paired with appropriate modeling from teachers and administrators, is the first step toward creating lifelong readers.

If your school is interested in accepting the challenge, e-mail Townsend Press at www.townsendpress.com or call 800-772-6410 and ask for Mrs. Emily.

Motivated Students . . .



Richland One School District(cont.)

Alcorn Middle School's Knights Move from Ordinary to Extraordinary

Alcorn Middle School's parents, teachers, and students will be living the theme "Transitioning from Ordinary to Extraordinary," which was introduced by their new principal, Dr. Baron R. Davis. As if the Alcorn "Knights," were aspiring to be "knighted," the teachers and students are already reflecting a culture of change, which will and has already resulted in an "extraordinary sense of emergency" about improving student achievement.

In his first letter to parents and students, Dr. Davis emphasized to them, "Your primary role as students in the transitioning from ordinary to extraordinary begins with you setting and achieving high goals for academic performance, displaying appropriate behavior and conduct, demonstrating cultural and social tolerance for others, showing respect at all time for faculty, staff, peers, and, most importantly, yourself."

The ordinary buildings at Alcorn Middle are quickly becoming an extraordinary complex. Students are expected to move into the first phase of their "new extraordinary building" around February 2009.

Not only is Alcorn Middle changing its physical appearance, but there is a sense of pride as the

Alcorn Middle team gears up to make EXTRAORDINARY improvements in test scores.

To that end, Dr. Davis indicates that at the beginning of this school year, the primary focus will be on the following:

(1) PREP ME (Preparatory Regalia Encouragement Program Morning Enrichment), a program offered to students in the morning prior to first period on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. During PREP ME, sixth graders use Success Maker, seventh graders receive tutorials in the media center and professional development room, and eighth graders do a four-week rotation through the core subjects (math, ELA, social studies, and science). (2) The second emphasis is in the Literacy Class in which all students are scheduled.

Teachers continue to receive professional development in order to better serve students in the Literacy Across the Curriculum initiative. (3) As in all Richland County School District One schools, Alcorn Middle School will continue its implementation of Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS). This district-

initiative provides a comprehensive school-wide system of discipline where learning and teaching are valued.

When asked about the vision of moving from Ordinary to Extraordinary, Gwen Flowers, the principal's secretary, stated, "Going from ordinary to extraordinary means instead of giving 100 percent, you must give 110 percent. We cannot continue to do things the same as in the past. We have to fill in the gaps." Matthew Walker, a seventh-grader, said that "going from ordinary to extraordinary means instead of low test score, high test scores....it means better expectations." The buzz is in the air...ALCORN MUST MOVE FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY!

Finally, Dr. Davis continued in his letter to parents and students, "Prowess, justice, honor, courage, faith, humility, largesse, nobility, and franchise should govern [our] actions and become a part of [our] daily repertoire; for they will serve you well as you begin your journey of **transitioning from ordinary**

to extraordinary." We know that the public's eyes are on Alcorn, and we invite them to watch us as we go from ordinary to extraordinary in the coming years.



These two staff members pose for a picture during a meeting.



Technology enhances learning

Richland One School District(cont.)

Gibbes Middle School Off to a Great Beginning

The administration at Gibbes Middle School is trying to start a trend by hosting single-gender academies for sixth graders. The belief is that single-gender core classes will help students learn the same content and standards in different ways and at different paces. They see the benefit to the students as a better chance of not dropping out of high school, more focused participation, more open discussions in classes, and the opportunity to develop leadership roles. Students are readily adapting to this concept and find the single-gender classes as "okay for learning"!

Additionally, the school has been the benefactor of donated books for the students via the language arts teachers. One method for use of these books began during the first nine weeks as they began reading ***The Bully***. The math and language arts

teachers conferred on ways that this could be supported through both subject areas. The results for students were an emphasis on the importance of reading and the benefit of hearing about this in several classes. The reading of the selected text also enhances the focus on literacy that is being guided by Richland School District One.



Students donate toys for a cause



Students receive check from BlueCross BlueShield

Eau Claire High School On The Move

Facing an improvement rating of excellent, the administration has to continue to walk the talk to keep things heading in the right direction for the school year 2008–09. Several departmental reorganizations and re-prioritizing will help shape a great school year. The major focus this year will be to keep faculty and staff focused on performing well on any and all assessments. Teachers and staff have participated in district-wide staff development sessions on assessments and analyzing data and are constantly referring to their data walls as they march through the year.

Not only does the staff hear about the needs for the year, but students are continuously reminded through mini assemblies about their responsibilities for academic achievement. Teachers will review data from the first assessment within the next week to determine remedial assistance and instructional focus. From this data, the after school tutorials and the

Saturday school will develop plans for intervention.

Signs that this team effort is working showed in the recently released AYP results. Eau Claire High School is one of a few in the state to "***have made it!***" Congratulations! Meet them!



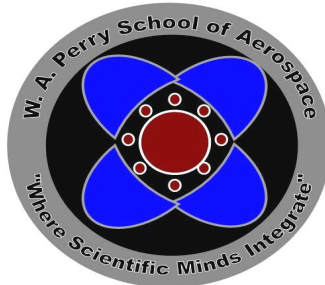
Richland One School District(cont.)

W.A. Perry School of Aerospace

Week of August 25–September 5, 2008



Aerospace science students launch parachutes



School of Aerospace



Aerospace math student calculates the area of a wing



Aerospace Education student prepares to construct the Delta Wing paper airplane

The W.A. Perry School of Aerospace is a school-with-in-a-school program that will feature a scientifically based aerospace curriculum integrating all core subject areas and the related arts. It is designed to expose students to a rigorous, challenging, innovative and engaging educational experience.

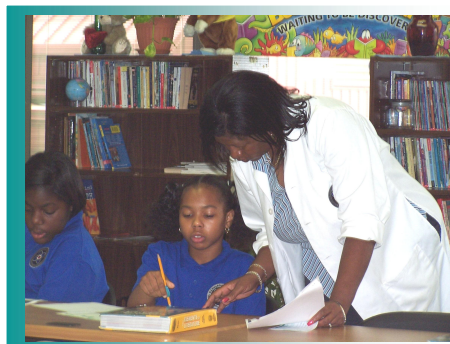
The W. A. Perry School of Aerospace opened its doors with 55 students (sixth, seventh, and eighth graders) on August 18, 2008, under the leadership of Demetria Clemons, school principal.

Staff members include Major Cynthia Taylor, Aerospace Education Instructor; Major Rosalyn Peterson, Leadership Instructor; Mrs. D. Evans, Aerospace English Language Arts; Mrs. M. Strivastava, Aerospace Science; Mr. S. Akella, Aerospace Math; and Mr. B. Harrison, Aerospace Social Studies.

Partners: Richland County School District One Challenger Center, University Of SC, United States Civil Air Patrol (Captain Kathy Piersama, SC Wing Director of Aerospace)



Aerospace geography student tracks global position of Hurricane Hannah



Aerospace ELA (English Language Arts) students write reflections on completed Hovercraft projects

W.A. Perry Middle School(cont.)

W.A. Perry PPS Summer Conference Presentation

During the First Annual Palmetto Priority Schools Summer Conference, the school leadership team of W.A. Perry, under the direction of Demetria Clemons, provided an outstanding presentation entitled CSI: Climate & Culture.

The entire focus of the presentation was the importance of school climate and culture in Continuous School Improvement. The session provided opportunities for self-reflection, distinguishing and identifying indicators of climate and culture, personal leadership assessment, and application of crucial knowledge and skills.

The format was interactive. Participants completed a survey on leadership style/personality at work, followed by a discussion on the impact of the leadership style of the principal on school climate and culture. Participants also completed a sensory survey of their school site

with a discussion on strengths and weaknesses.

Some of the elements of the PowerPoint presentation included the following:

Terms — Climate and Culture

- What is School Climate?
- Components of School Climate Environment
- What is School Culture?
- Components of School Culture
- Leadership Role
- Leadership Tool

The W.A. Perry leadership team's presentation, Continuous School Improvement through School Climate and Culture, provided attendees with the skills needed to establish an environment that is conducive to learning. In addition, the team also assisted schools in realizing that this does not happen by chance. W.A. Perry also emphasized that establishing and maintaining a positive learning environment is critical to student achievement. Mrs. Clemons informed principals that they must have an understanding of the principles of climate and culture and be proficient in the application of leadership skills and techniques that enhance student learning.

The session provided opportunities for self-reflection, identifying indicators of climate and culture, personal leadership assessment and application. From the moment participants walked into the session, they sensed the extraordinary nature of this highly interactive and multi-

sensory presentation! Participants left the session renewed, with a better understanding of their role as instructional leaders, their current school environment, and with activities that they can use to foster a positive learning environment.



Students assemble a rocket for a class project



Students participate in the Civil Air Patrol

Allendale County School District

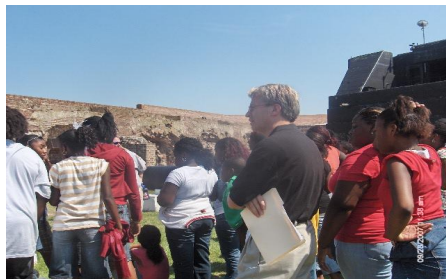
Allendale-Fairfax Middle School

Allendale-Fairfax Middle is holding middle schoolers interest in math (which is a remarkable feat unto itself) by installing an I Can Learn computer classroom. This is an innovative, interactive computer aided natural learning system that delivers standards-based algebra and pre-algebra courses to middle school students. The system places students at individual computers where they view interactive lessons that include pre-tests, review, guided practice, and post-tests. Students must pass the post-test in order to proceed to the next lesson. Teachers are available if a student runs into trouble proceeding to the next lesson and can help students until they are able to move on. The program allows teachers to work more closely with students and, likewise, allows others to move at a faster pace. It is very prescriptive for each individual student. The program is effective in that it teaches students in a manner they are accustomed to learning - through technology and by touching all the learning styles

of hearing, seeing, touching, and writing. This innovative idea was that of new principal Brian Newsome, who was attracted to the program because it brought so many good teaching practices into the classroom. "It involves note taking, lecture, hands-on experiences, formative and summative assessments, and homework. The students thus far have enjoyed this as part of their math instruction and have the opportunity to further utilize the program in our after-school program." Principal Newsome believes ALL students at Allendale-Fairfax Middle can learn given the proper environment and the proper tools. The I Can Learn Classroom is one tool being utilized to increase student achievement. Parents were given the opportunity to visit the I Can Learn Classroom at recent PTO and SIC meetings.



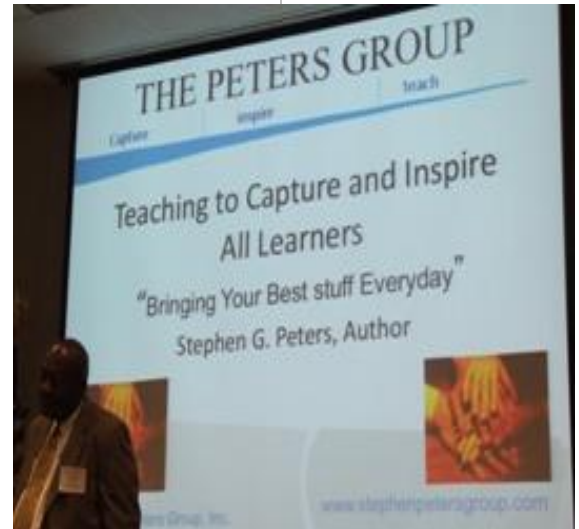
Service learning ...



Engaged Students ...



PPS Summer Conference: Educators get educated!



Stephen Peters, The peters Group



Gayle Sawyer, CERRA (Center for Educator, Recruitment, Retention and Advancement)



Mike Schmoker, National Educational Speaker, with Carmen Pough-Banks and Paula Harris, Palmetto Priority Schools

PPS Summer Conference: Educators get educated!



Synetria Hawkins, Assistant Principal, Estill Middle School



Kati Haycock, National Educational Speaker



Engaged conference participants



Tom Boysen, Globe Scholars

Star Academy News

Marion Intermediate, Olympia STAR Projects Selected for All-Health Team

COLUMBIA Students at Marion Intermediate School in Marion District One and at Olympia Learning Center's STAR Academy in Richland District One have been selected for the All-Health Team by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control.

Both schools were recognized for having youth groups working to promote good health in the community. Marion Intermediate's third graders were honored for their Fit and Healthy Project, while STAR Academy female students were honored for their Olympia Go Red for Women project.

"Fit and Healthy was created to encourage healthy eating and physical activity," said Karen Scruggs, Marion Intermediate's school nurse. "The objective of the program is to implement activities that promote good dietary habits while increasing student awareness and interests in selecting healthy food choices through various activities."

Scruggs said surveys were given out to the students to collect data on their fruits and vegetable consumption. They also collected data on daily physical activity. Body

mass index screening data was collected at the beginning of the project and at the end to measure the program's impact.

"Results from the survey will be placed on the district and school Web sites," Scruggs said. "The students will assist with placing articles in school newsletters and presenting information at PTO meetings to tell parents and community about the importance of healthy eating and physical activity."

Olympia's Go Red for Women project was an extension of Providence Hospital's Red Dress Campaign that uses the visual of a red dress to help communicate that heart disease is not just a man's disease, according to Cheryl Guyton, nurse at Olympia Learning Center.

"The students conducted research to learn about strokes, heart disease, and how to prevent both conditions," Guyton said. "They created family health histories by using a 'Family Tree' diagram to record their family's heart history."

Guyton said the "Family Tree" could be shared with the students' doctors to learn about things that can be done to reduce the risk of family history heart disease.

The students also spread their heart disease knowledge by displaying posters and appearing on their in-school television program. They hosted a "Ladies Tea" and presented information about heart disease and prevention to other female students, family members, and staff.

Both schools received \$500 to expand their projects, t-shirts and other All-Health Team items, recognition on the All-Health Team Web site, and a television spot on WIS-TV in Columbia. DHEC and WIS-TV sponsor the All-Health Team. Each month, the partnership recognizes an individual or youth group. More information is available at the All-Health Team Web site.



Faculty and parents
collaborate to
improve student
achievement



Learning Ceases Not!

Learning Ceases Not! If we listen, observe, as well as carefully synthesize information, we will definitely learn something from every situation. How we decide to utilize the lessons may determine the extent to which we prevail—in both current and future endeavors. Opened-mindedness, therefore, is key to successful teacher, administrator, leader, and associate development; this, in turn, yields positive benefits for school improvement initiatives.

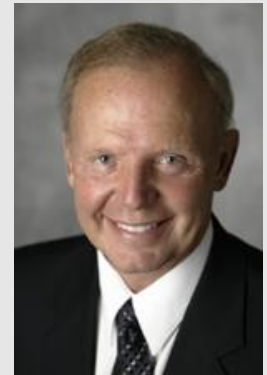
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Together, We Can Make a Difference

Partners. Statewide universities, the Education Oversight Committee, the Governor's Schools for the Arts & Humanities and Science & Math, and CERRA have all pledged their support to this project.

Dedicated Professionals will work collaboratively to find solutions to problems and meet the needs of students, faculty, and staff of the Priority Schools.

On-site Support. The South Carolina Department of Education and CERRA will assist schools in building teams of talented educators who will work together toward the same goal.

“Make no mistake, there are some real heroes working in these 16 schools. I know because I have met some of them, and we’re going to be counting on them in the months and years ahead.”

Produced and Edited by:

The Palmetto Priority School Office

David Rawlinson, Director, and P.P.S. Staff

Dr. Jim Rex
State
Superintendent
of Education

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